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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TBILISI 002822

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DEPT FOR EUR DAS BRYZA AND EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: TBILISI PROTESTS: SITREP NO. 7

REF: A. TBILISI 2802

[1](#)B. TBILISI 2813

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

State of Emergency Will be Lifted November 16

[1](#)1. (U) Speaker Nino Burjanadze said in a televised statement that the state of emergency imposed on November 7 will be lifted on November 16. She stated "this is important for the international community and our society." Burjanadze also reaffirmed the government's readiness to continue talks with the opposition.

Imedi TV Broadcast License Suspended

[1](#)2. (SBU) Imedi TV managing director Bidzina Baratashvili said he received notice on November 13 from the Tbilisi City Court that the Imedi TV broadcast license has been suspended and the station's assets frozen. The ruling was dated November 7, and was based on statements by the station's owner Badri Patarkatsishvili, which according to the court contained calls to overthrow the government. Baratashvili said Imedi TV plans to appeal the ruling to a higher court and will be determining the extent of damage inflicted to equipment when police entered and closed the station.

[1](#)3. (U) Nino Burjanadze met with Imedi journalists, including Giorgi Targamadze, the controversial Imedi news anchor, on November 14 at the Parliament. The journalists shared information about police actions the day of the Imedi shutdown. Burjanadze did not say when Imedi would be able to resume broadcasting. Conservative Party leader Kukava said Imedi would be high on the agenda during the opposition's talks with Burjanadze November 15.

[1](#)4. (U) Tbilisi-based Kavkasia TV also remains off the air. The owner and broadcaster, Davit Akubardia, was told by authorities the tower that broadcasts the TV's signal is out. Akubardia does not know who will fix the tower.

DAS Bryza Continues Meetings in Tbilisi

[1](#)5. (C) DAS Matthew Bryza continued meetings with opposition leaders from the Republican Party and New Rights on November [1](#)5. He also met with Tbilisi Mayor Gigi Ugulava. DAS Bryza continues to press for restoration of Imedi to the airwaves and has promoted the idea of a European-style body to monitor the media and ensure ethical reporting in Georgia during the election period. President Saakashvili told Bryza November

12 that he is amenable to returning Imedi to the air if appropriate safeguards can be instituted (ref B).

Opposition Briefs Diplomatic Community; Continues Dialogue

¶6. (SBU) Ten representatives from the opposition parties briefed the diplomatic community on November 14. The leaders laid out ten preconditions for free and fair elections. Key demands were that the police stop arrests and persecution of participants in the protests, a government investigation into police actions during the protests, removal of restrictions on the media and reopening of Imedi television, and the holding of a free and fair presidential elections. The opposition complained they are receiving unequal time on the government television channel, saying the state of emergency gives the President a political advantage. Republican Party leader Tina Khidasheli called the government channel a "PR tool for the president."

¶7. (C) Republican party leader Davit Usupashvili thanked the United States and the international community for their support for electoral reforms. He asked the international community to assist in elections monitoring in Tbilisi and in the regions. Salome Zourabashvili announced that she will travel to Europe to meet with European Parliament leaders and possibly the NATO Secretary General to inform them of the opposition's plans and garner international support. During her absence, presidential candidate Levan Gachechiladze, joined by Usupashvili and Conservative MP Kakha Kukava, will lead the campaign. Gachechiladze said he will only give live press interviews. Zourabashvili commented that any boycott of the election would be very counterproductive, because the United Council of Opposition's (UNC) goal is to make positive

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change and achieve free and democratic elections.

¶8. (U) The UNC also met with government representative Vice-Speaker Mikheil Machavariani November 14 and is scheduled to meet again with Speaker Nino Burjanadze November 15.

Government Proposals for Election Code Reform

¶9. (U) The government submitted a package of amendments to the election laws to Parliamentary committees on November 14, which will continue to work on them. The proposal would reduce the election threshold from seven percent to five percent, reorganize the election commissions to include representatives of political parties and change the rules for electing majoritarian MPs to give smaller parties a larger chance to win seats. The Central Election Commission will be composed of five members appointed by the President, one member appointed by the ruling National Movement party, and six members from each of the six opposition parties eligible for state funding: New Rightists, Industrialists, Labor Party, Freedom Party, Republican Party, and Conservative Party. Each of these parties cleared the three percent and four percent thresholds during parliamentary and local elections, respectively. Details were also worked out for the district and precinct election commission levels. The package is scheduled for discussion in Parliament November 15. Republican Party leader Usupashvili told diplomats November 14 that the opposition is not entirely satisfied with the government's proposed amendments, nor is Davitashvili satisfied with the progress being made in the government's talks with the opposition.

¶10. (U) Finance Minister Nika Gilauri announced plans November 13 to allocate GEL 20 million (USD 12.3 million) for Central Election Commission (CEC) activities related to the January 5 presidential elections and the plebiscite on the

date of parliamentary elections. Originally the CEC 2007 budget was GEL 9.5 million (USD 5.9 million). The extra allocation will come from the presidential and government reserve funds.

Saakashvili Addresses Public

¶11. (SBU) President Saakashvili addressed Tbilisi Medical University on November 14. The 45-minute meeting was broadcast on Georgian Public TV. His speech was attended mainly by older health care professionals. Saakashvili has not often been seen addressing older citizens. The President's demeanor was subdued. He focused mainly on health-related issues relevant to the medical community and, in a rare conciliatory gesture, admitted some Georgians are going hungry and some of the reforms the government enacted may need to be corrected. He claimed "huge resources" are being used against Georgia and that Russia is acting toward Georgia as it had in 1921. He accused Russia of promoting revolution in Georgia in order to justify invading it, but warned that Georgia has sufficient forces to respond. The speech was well-received by the audience, who said this kind of dialogue is critical.

Presidential Pardon for 3,000 Inmates

¶12. (U) Saakashvili said November 14 he planned to pardon inmates convicted for "petty crimes." Deputy Prosecutor Nika Gvaramia announced that 1,000 inmates will be released soon. The government plans to reduce prison terms for an additional 2,000 prisoners. The opposition alleged the decision is linked to the upcoming election. However, the chairman of the parliamentary Committee for Legal Affairs, Levan Bezhashvili, said the government has been working on the idea for a long time.

Public Defender Condemns Persecution of Protesters

¶13. (U) Sozar Subari, Public Defender and Ombudsman, released a statement November 13 calling on law enforcement agencies to immediately stop "persecuting and terrorizing" political party activists and ordinary citizens who participated in the anti-government demonstrations. The Interior Ministry denied it is persecuting anyone, but confirmed it is investigating violent attacks on police officers on November 7. The Ministry also confirmed that an activist from the Labor Party

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was arrested November 13.

Court Orders Okruashvili Back into Custody

¶14. (U) On November 15, a court in Tbilisi granted the General Prosecutor's Office's request to remand Irakli Okruashvili to custody after he failed to appear in Tbilisi for additional questioning by prosecutors. Hearings on Okruashvili's corruption case are scheduled for November 16. Okruashvili remains in Germany. His attorney alleged that the real reason Okruashvili was ordered back into custody is the interviews he has given in Germany recanting his confession and reaffirming his charges against President Saakashvili.

TEFFT